

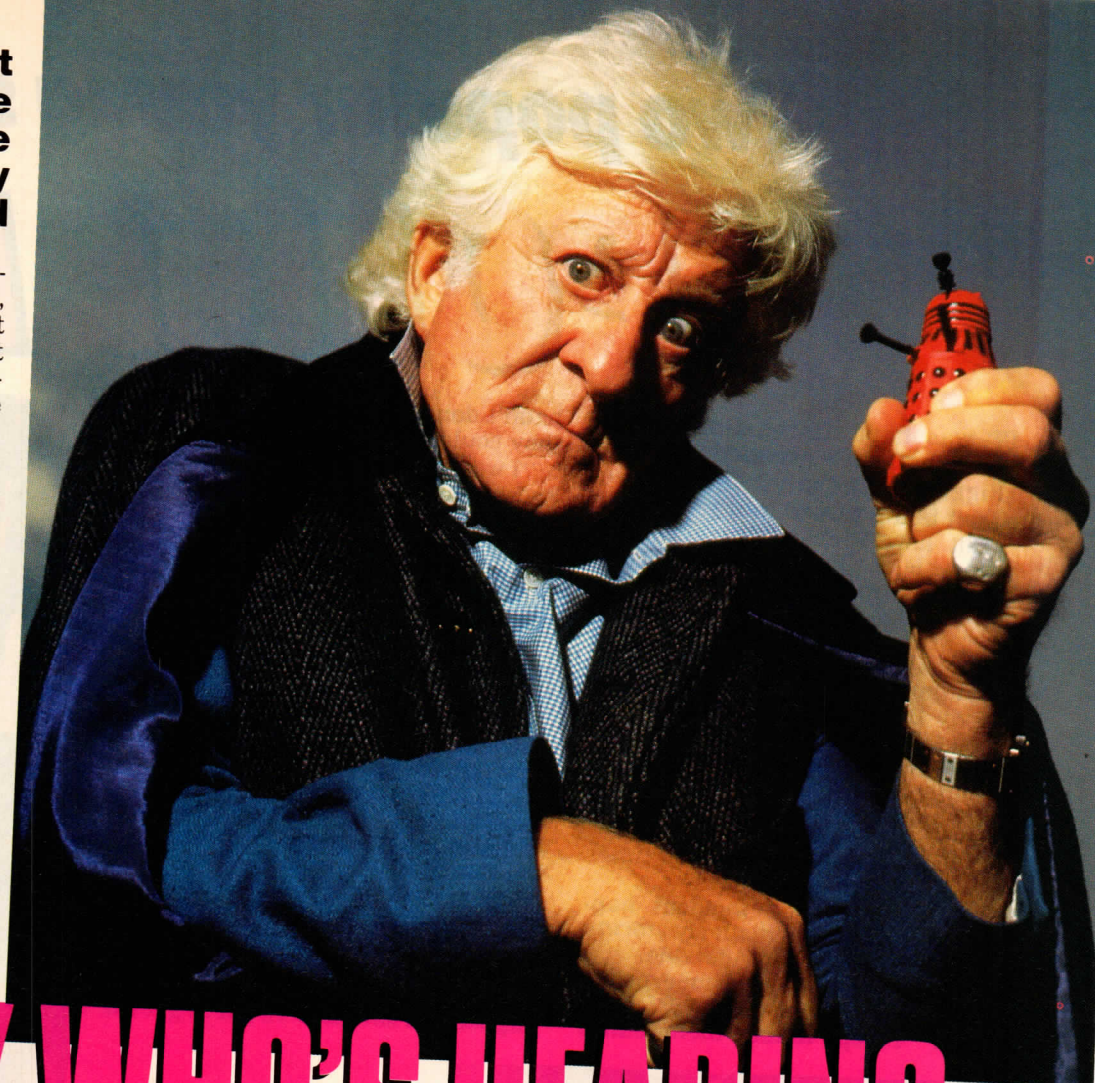
Fans get their chance to test the legendary Time Lord

JON PERTWEE, everybody's favorite Dr Who, flies to Australia next month to be chief guest and speaker at a three-day conference on the sci-fi legend.

The dynamic 70-year-old actor-comedian, who played the celebrated Time Lord in almost 300 episodes from 1966 to 1970, will lecture and answer questions from thousands of fans who followed the program during its 27-year TV run.

Although Pertwee has been the guest at countless Dr Who conferences, particularly in the U.S., this one — in Brisbane — is his first Down Under.

Nevertheless, he's been a frequent visitor over the years and is looking forward to this trip.



LOOK WHO'S HEADING DOWN UNDER

"I love Australia and I love Australians," he says while discussing his full Dr Who schedule.

"I like their forthrightness. They might say, 'I don't think I like you very much', and you say, 'And I'm not mad about you either', and they say something like, 'Well, let's have a drink and see if we can't sort this out'.

"You know where you are with an Australian. They're tough and outspoken, but I find them charming and kind and, well, I love 'em. Unlike the Americans, who seem sincere yet you never really know where you stand with them."

Jon has to be really on his toes when he goes to Dr Who pow-wows. "They know every detail about

every program, every Dr Who adventure, every journey through space and time," he says.

"I talk off-the-cuff when I'm there. I hate a lot of preparation. But I don't know the answers to half the questions they ask. It could be something like, 'On the planet Amadeus, when the Volpar gave you the crystal, did you feel that Chuvada would kill Cheega?' and I mean... I don't know what they're talking about!

"So I say something like, 'I'm glad you asked that question. Now, what do you think he ought to

have done?' And the bloke says blah, blah, blah and I say, 'Well, you are absolutely right!'"

When Jon took over as Dr Who, after Bill Hartnell and Patrick Troughton, the program already had a significant cult following.

"But we never thought it would achieve the enormous world-wide popularity — watched in 56 countries, I believe — that it has," he says.

Dr Who has been lucrative for him. "But it hasn't made us the wealth it would have done if the series had been made by

the Americans," he says. "Why, for instance, haven't there been blockbuster movies, as there have been of Star Trek?"

"All those Trek people — William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy and the others — are fabulously rich," he adds wistfully. "If Dr Who had been handled right we could all have earned millions."

Jon keeps busy attending Dr Who conferences (after Brisbane, it's Chicago) and is writing a TV comedy series.

"Retire?" He looked shocked. "Actors don't retire. Like old soldiers, or old journalists, come to that," he says grinning, "they just fade away."

*From Peter Bishop
in London*